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SIPDIS

WELLINGTON PASS TO AUCKLAND

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TAGS: [AS](#) [FJ](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: DFAT OFFICIALS COMMENT ON BAINIMARAMA'S ELECTION  
POSTPONEMENT

REF: SUVA 292

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR JAMES COLE. REASON: 1.4 (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: DFAT Fiji Section officials told Polcouns and Poloff on July 22 that in their view Commodore Frank Bainimarama's postponement of elections until at least 2010 will further alienate him from most Fijians and exacerbate chances of political clashes on the island. PNG and Fiji Section Director Stephen Henningham said that the international community must stay united in its calls for polls next year and to also warn Bainimarama that his action could cause serious political and economic consequences for Fiji. He added that the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) next month will be the first opportunity for his Pacific Islands counterparts to engage Bainimarama on his decision. (End summary)

BAINIMARAMA DRAWS A LINE, DFAT OFFICIAL SAYS

¶2. (C) DFAT PNG and Fiji Section Director Stephen Henningham and Fiji Taskforce Executive Officer Rachel Cooper told Emboffs on July 22 that Frank Bainimarama's announcement the day before that elections will not be held before 2010, only a day after he described election preparations to visiting Australian Foreign Minister Smith (reftel), was a clumsy move that exposed him to criticism from the international community and one that will exacerbate discontent within the Fijian population.

ISOLATED LEADER

¶3. (C) Henningham said that the next step to take in the face of Bainimarama's announcement is to shore up a united Pacific nations front to pressure Bainimarama to change his mind and stick to the commitments he made at the last PIF in Tonga. There should also be a concerted effort to warn the Fijian leader that his decision to push back elections to some unspecified date after 2009 will only foment more discontent among the Fijian population and further isolate Fiji within the international community. He added that next month's PIF in Niue will be the first opportunity for Bainimarama's counterparts from the Pacific islands nations to engage with him and persuade him to back away from his election postponement.

McCallum